

from the North Sea to the Black Sea, and from Saxony to Sicily. Europe is the "continent of varieties." To explore it, circumnavigate its coast line, master its intricacies, demands an enterprising, aggressive people. The dead conservatism of China and the iron caste of India could not survive in Europe. These mountains would break up the vast herds of Asia into smaller bodies. This is the continent to arouse dormant energies and quicken mighty enterprises. Here is the zone of power.

And so we find that, as Asia is marked by a dead level of popular life, Europe is marked by individual development. God was transferring the political sceptre and the historic arena to a new continent, and thus a gigantic stride was taken in preparation for the Gospel of the kingdom which both deals with mankind one by one and develops a true individualism.

But the European capital is not to be at Macedon—that is too far eastward; and so the *Roman ascendancy* begins B.C. 168, and the last great step of preparation is taken. Under the Cæsars, Rome conquered and mastered the world. Julius Cæsar, the Roman Alexander, in eight years met in battle three millions of men, of whom he slew one third and took another third captive. It was a gigantic struggle for supremacy, by which Roman arms subdued the world and Roman roads ran to its limits. But it brought God's "fulness of times." Never before was the world made ready for the advent of Christ. Universal peace succeeded universal war. The eagle was ready to carry the cross everywhere. The world empire had come to its highest completeness, its most perfect political unity, and its fullest realization of a brotherhood of nations which is possible without the Gospel.

There was another element in this preparation which must not be overlooked. Decay had begun, and there was nothing that could arrest it but the salt of the Gospel. We all know that ripeness borders on rottenness. As soon as a harvest is fully ripe, the sickle must be put in or the crop will rapidly deteriorate. The very same conditions most favorable to growth where life exists—light, heat, moisture, nutrition—also favor rapid decay where life does not exist or develop. The Roman Empire had attained unto a ripeness which without the intervention of God would become rottenness, and actually did. But so far as God's plan went—to make a prepared way for the advent of Christ and the preaching of the Gospel—now for the first the fulness of the times had come. Over the Roman roads, with the help of Roman letters and Roman citizenship, though disdaining the aid of Roman arms, the Word of Life was to be borne with rapid steps to Spain and Gaul, to Germany and Britain. Paul, pushing his way to Antioch, to Cyprus, to Ephesus, to Corinth, to Rome, and possibly to Spain and Britain, seems to us the Cæsar of the Church.